REMARKS

The claims remaining in the present application are Claims 1, 3-11, 13-16, 18, and 20-21. Claims 1, 3, 11, 13, 16, 18, and 21 have been amended. No new matter has been added as a result of these amendments.

EXAMINER INTERVIEW SUMMARY

On February 11, 2004, Ronald Pomerenke for the Applicants conducted a telephonic interview with Examiners Isaac Woo and Shahid Alam. Claim 1 was discussed with respect to Hagmann et al., U.S. Pat. No. 6,338,055. A proposed amendment to Claim 1 was discussed. No definitive agreements were reached.

35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 3-11, 13-16, 18, and 20-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hagmann et al., U.S. Pat. No. 6,338,055 (hereinafter, Hagmann) in view of Anwar et al., U.S. Pat. No. 6,490,577 (hereinafter, Anwar). The rejection is respectfully traversed for the reasons below.

Independent Claim 1 recites:

> A method for transaction processing of a search transaction comprising the steps of:
> a) receiving a plurality of search queries from users, each of said plurality of search queries including search criteria and including a user address;
> b) normalizing said search criteria so as to obtain a single normalized search criteria for said plurality of search queries;
> c) transmitting said single normalized search criteria to a search engine;
> d) receiving a response from said search engine that includes search results;
> e) generating a response to each of said search queries from users, each response including search results corresponding to the search criteria submitted by that particular user; and
> f) transmitting said responses to each of said users.

Independent Claim 1 recites "normalizing search criteria so as to obtain a single normalized search criteria for a plurality of search criteria. Claim 1 also recites

"transmitting the single normalized search criteria to a search engine." Thus, Claim 1 recites limitations with respect to receiving search queries from users and "normalizing" the queries to form a "normalized search criteria", which is passed to a search engine.

Neither Hagmann nor Anwar, alone or in combination, teach or suggest the limitations of Claim 1. As claimed, the limitations of "normalizing" and "normalized search criteria" are neither taught nor suggested by the prior art.

Hagmann discloses a system that builds data structures that are used to "optimize" elements in Hagmann's system query processing activities. The rejection appears to be equating the claimed "normalizing" with the prior art's "optimizing" (see, e.g., rejection page 5). Applicants respectfully assert that the claimed "normalizing" is neither taught nor suggested by the "optimizing" disclosed in the prior art. While limitations are not read into the claims from the specification, claims are read as would be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art in light of the specification. The specification, as read by one of ordinary skill in the art, provides guidance in interpreting the limitations of "normalizing" and "normalized search criteria". The specification at page 24, line 9 et seq. indicates that the terms "normalize" and "normalization" include those techniques used during logical data modeling.

Hagmann teaches a system that optimizes by determining how to respond efficiently to queries that may be affected by events. Hagmann builds data structures that decide which query to run, based on which queries may be impacted by events. Hagmann decides how to run queries alone and together (Hagmann, col. 6, lines 54-61). However, optimizing by deciding which queries to run or how to run

queries alone or together is not the claimed, "normalizing said search criteria so as to obtain a single normalized search criteria for said plurality of search queries."

Applicants further assert that Hagmann's teaching of turning database operation inside out (col. 1, lines 33-40) is inconsistent with the limitations of Claim 1. For example, Hagmann's system responds to events (e.g., a package is delivered) by determining which outstanding queries need to be run (i.e., are affected by the changed data due to the event) and runs those queries. (See also, Hagmann col. 6, lines 5-11). As an illustration, Hagmann may respond to the event of a package being delivered by running queries that are impacted to the package delivery. This inside out implementation is inconsistent with forming a single normalized search criteria for a plurality of search queries and passing that search criteria on to a search engine, as the Applicants have claimed.

Claim 1 recites that the single normalized search criteria is transmitted to a search engine. Hagmann fails to send the "optimized" result on to a search engine. That is, Hagmann's result of optimizing is a data structure, not a search criteria that is sent on to a search engine. Therefore, even if Hagmann's result of optimization were, for the sake of argument, equated to the claimed normalization, the claimed "transmitting said single normalized search criteria to a search engine" is not taught or suggested by Hagmann.

Hagmann may describe what is referred to as a normal form at col. 11, lines 58-65. To the extent that Hagmann may teach placing a search request into what Hagmann refers to as a "normal form", Hagmann's only example teaches breaking a single query into two separate queries in a case in which an "OR" clause is used in a "where expression". This provides multiple entry points to satisfy the original query,

and is thus inconsistent with the claimed limitation, which produces a single search criteria from multiple queries.

The combination of Hagmann and Anwar fails to teach or suggest the limitations of Claim 1, as Anwar fails to remedy the deficiencies of Hagmann. Anwar is concerned with a search engine that identifies words and phrases that give rise to search ambiguity (Abstract). However, Anwar fails to teach or suggest either the claimed, "normalizing said search criteria so as to obtain a single normalized search criteria for said plurality of search queries," or the claimed, "transmitting said single normalized search criteria to a search engine."

For the foregoing reasons, the combination of Hagmann and Anwar fails to teach or suggest the limitations of Claim 1. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request allowance of Claim 1.

For the reasons discussed in the response to Claim 1, Independent Claims 11, 16, and 18 are neither taught nor suggested by Hagmann nor Anwar, alone or in combination. As such, Independent Claims 11, 16, and 18 are patentable over the combination of Hagmann and Anwar.

Claims 3-10, 13-15, and 20-21 depend from Independent Claims 1, 11, and 18, which are believed to be allowable for the foregoing rationale. As such, Claims 3-10, 13-15, and 20-21 are believed to be allowable.

CONCLUSION

Based on the arguments and amendments presented above, it is respectfully submitted that aims 1, 3-11, 13-16, 18, and 20-21 overcome the objections and rejections of record. Therefore, allowance of aims 1, 3-11, 13-16, 18, and 20-21 is respectfully solicited.

Should the Examiner have a question regarding the instant amendment and response, the Applicant invites the Examiner to contact the Applicant's undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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